
SERMON DELIVERED APRIL 22, 1956

AT

MEMORIAL CHAPEL OF THE HOLY COMMUNION

27th and Wharton Streets, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

on the occasion of

the 47th Anniversary of the death of

The Founder Of The Church

GEORGE CLIFFORD THOMAS

BY

THE REV. DR. GIBSON BELL

Rector of All Saints Church, Wynnewood, Penna.

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EASTER - APRIL 22, 1956

*** FOUNDER'S DAY ***

Recital by Mr. George C. T. Remington, Grand-son of the founder and Dean of the Palm Beach County Chapter of the American Guild of Organists.

Prelude No. 3)	Johann
Prelude and Fugue No. 2)	Sebastian
Prelude and Fugue No. 6)	Bach
Dominus Vobiscum		R. S. Stoughton
(The Lord Be With You)		

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PROCESSIONAL	526	A. H. MANN	<i>"O Saviour, Precious Saviour"</i>
VENITE		A. S. SULLIVAN	
BENEDICTUS ES DOMINE		F. E. WARD	
JUBILATE DEO		C. J. ELVEY	
DEDICATION HYMN	461	A. S. SULLIVAN	<i>"Angel Voices Now Singing"</i>
HYMN	212	J. F. WADE	

SERMON - Preacher, the Rev. Dr. Gibson Bell
Rector of All Saints Church
Wynnewood, Penna.

OFFERTORY ANTHEM - "With A Voice of Singing"

DOXOLOGY		Shaw	
AMERICA	427	Old Hundred	
SEVEN-FOLD AMEN		Harmonia Angelicana	<i>"My Country 'tis of Thee"</i>
PRAYER HYMN		John Stainer	<i>"God Be in my Head"</i>
RECESSIONAL HYMN	530	Sydney H. Nicholson	
POSTLUDE - Dedication March		A. S. Sullivan	<i>"Onward Christian Soldiers"</i>
		Stults	

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When it was first suggested to me that I come here on FOUNDER'S DAY, I was perfectly delighted. It brought back memories of my boyhood. I thank God I was brought up in a Christian family and I thank God that my father knew George C. Thomas and held before us his example, telling us of his spirit inspired only by God. Therefore, to be with you on the day when you memorialize him is a pleasure and a privilege.

I frankly selected the Second Lesson of the Vine and the Branches, which was read this morning, because I feel that therein lies the secret of George C. Thomas's understanding of the work that God would have him do and how he would be able to do it. "I am the husbandman. Ye are the branches", Our Lord said. I think every single verse of that parable applies to you and me as we hear it read. I think that every phrase compels us to pause and to consider what Our Lord meant when He gave that parable. And I think every word therein offers to you and to me more than we can even carry away. "I am the husbandman. Ye are the branches." Apart from Christ, and Our Lord meant that we take this from that parable, apart from Christ you and I can do nothing worthwhile.

I have so many times in my experiences as Rector of All Saints Church been told when I have come to call on different families to tell the parents how important it is for them to come to Church if they expect their children to grow up as Christian individuals, I have so many times been told: "I am honest; I am good; I set a good example for my children. Why should I go further than that?" Just the moment that you and I cut ourselves away from the Vine, (the parable is so clear to everyone), just the moment that you and I cut ourselves away from that Vine, we lose that force which we must have in our material lives. We lose that Force which God has for us. It means so much to us to live close to God.

There is a man living near me who presently resuscitates a large chemical organization which was going into the red and eventually, as the Directors looked upon the company, eventually must close up. They asked this man to take charge of this company and he accepted. What kind of a man was he?

I tell you this is an example for you and for me to follow. He was a man who never started the day without praying God to guide him in every business transaction through which he would pass that day, every problem which would come to face him. And he put that chemical company back on its feet,

So often it seems so unimportant, so unnecessary, when we are doing well in our daily work, to strive to find out how God would have us do. It is so important for us to do that. The very fact that we are branches of this great Vine gives us a kinship of spirit with Jesus Christ, Our Lord, and with God. That is what your Founder had - a kinship of spirit. The spirit compels us to spend ourselves in God's holy work, to spend ourselves in striving to find out what God's Will is for us. Not begrudgingly, not counting the cost, but with perfect trust and with perfect confidence that God will guide us into the right way and that God will help us solve our problems! The giving of ourselves to God, completely and uncompromisingly, is the truth we must face. We must give ourselves even as Our Lord gave Himself for you and for me. Let us ask ourselves how things stand on our side. Have we reciprocated that love of God, that dependence upon God for help in the material world? I think most of us in answering that question would say "yes, but shabbily. We take so much! God gives so much!

I cannot help but feel awfully happy right here in the atmosphere of the Chapel which was given to God as a thanksgiving offering that His word of love might be spread about this neighborhood. Such love for God and such a feeling of dependence upon God!

How eager we all are to serve our own interests and to meet our own ends in this world. Once our interests are served and ends met, then we say (isn't this true?), then we say we will give all our surplus. Do we have any surplus after we have lived our superficial lives looking out for our own interests?

My dear friends, we have today in our memories a man who gave of himself unstintingly, a man who sets an example and who should be a great

inspiration to you and to me. Let us remember the Friend in the Lesson this morning. Jesus said, "I am your Friend." Let us treat Him so.

I cannot let this sermon close here when I realize how much our benefactor did for the entire Church. I first heard of him from such an activity as Treasurer of the Foreign and Domestic Missionary Society, which has gone out of existence but whose work is carried on through the Missionary Society.

Our Lord in the Lesson for today gives a farewell discourse before He leaves this world plain, this planet. You remember that when he met with His eleven disciples after His Resurrection He then gave them an additional parting. "Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." That was the spirit of George C. Thomas and that is why he is such a tremendous inspiration to you and to me. He obeyed that order of Our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

We used to talk so often in my home, and you will pardon the reminiscence of mine, we used to talk so often of this great Christian man. My father knew him slightly in a business way. Of course, he knew him through the Church. And I remember once when we were questioning whether or not we should follow this command to go forward which Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ gave to the eleven Apostles at His last appearance to them, my father said, as we sat around the dinner table, that we should look at George C. Thomas and look at the Duke of Wellington. The Duke of Wellington was asked once whether or not he believed in missions and he said, "I have been brought up to follow all the orders that are given me and that is one order that I will never disobey. "Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." Thus did the Duke of Wellington interpret his marching orders. Thus did George C. Thomas accept his marching orders, and so too must we, if we are going to follow the example of Our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, we must receive our marching orders.

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SERMON DELIVERED APRIL 19, 1959

AT

MEMORIAL CHAPEL OF THE HOLY COMMUNION

27th and Wharton Streets, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

on the occasion of

the 50th Anniversary of the death of

The Founder Of The Church

GEORGE CLIFFORD THOMAS

BY

THE REV. DR. STANLEY R. WEST

RECTOR EMERITUS - CALVARY EPISCOPAL CHURCH

CONSHOHOCKEN, PENNSYLVANIA.

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V I C T O R Y T H R O U G H F A I T H

I feel greatly honored to be asked to bring the message this morning to this significant Anniversary Service for next Tuesday, April 21st, it will be 50 years since Mr. George C. Thomas entered into the nearer presence of his Lord. Then, too, I am particularly fond of this Post-Easter Season, and I believe it is of great importance in the development and growth of Christian Character.

The discipline of the Lenten Season is rapidly receding, and the inspiration of the glorious Eastertide is likewise passing into the shadows of past experience. It is, therefore, a good time to test the validity and permanence of their influence. If we are really concerned "to grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ"; if, with St. Paul, we earnestly seek "this one thing to do, to press on to the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus", then this Post-Easter Season may be a valuable time for testing and holding fast to these main objectives of our Christian lives.

In reading the tribute paid to Mr. Thomas by his Rector, the Reverend Nathaniel S. Thomas, on the Sunday after his death on the second Sunday after Easter, 1909, I find this timely and significant statement:

"Mr. Thomas was particularly fond of the Collects for the 2nd and 3rd Sundays after Easter, in fact, he was in the habit of pasting those two prayers in the front of the Confirmation Booklets he gave to each young person from the Sunday School upon the occasion of their Confirmation - a custom Dr. Bomberger tells me, which is continued in the Church of the Holy Apostles to this day. I feel sure we can in no way better honor the memory of Mr. Thomas at this Service than by now turning to these Collects in our Prayer Books, pages 171 and 173, and reading them together, that we may "read, mark and learn" their messages of this Post-Easter Season.

That for the second Sunday after Easter reads as follows:

"Almighty God, who hast given thine only begotten Son to be unto us both a sacrifice for sin and also an example

of godly life; Give us grace that we may always most thankfully receive that his estimable benefit, and also daily endeavor ourselves to follow the blessed steps of his most holy life, through the same thy Son Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen".

The key phrases here are:

"Most thankfully receive His Benefit and daily endeavor ourselves to follow His steps".

Now the Collect for the third Sunday after Easter.

"Almighty God, who showest to them that are in error the light of thy truth, to the intent that they may return into the way of righteousness; Grant unto all those who are admitted into the fellowship of Christ's Religion, that they may avoid those things that are contrary to their profession, and follow all such things as are agreeable to the same through our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen".

See how appropriate that prayer is to those recently confirmed and also how truly it reflects all that Mr. Thomas' life stood for!

Another reason, and a personal one, why I am very happy to be here this morning is that it so happens my ministry has coincided very closely with these 50 years which have transpired since Mr. Thomas' death. I was present in the Church of the Holy Apostles, as a student at the Philadelphia Divinity School, finishing my second year, when the Rector of the Parish, the Reverend Nathaniel S. Thomas, D.D., in May 1909, just two weeks after Mr. Thomas was buried from that Church, was consecrated to be the Bishop of the Missionary District of Wyoming. I was ordained to the Diaconate the following year, June 5, 1910.

My text, in the light of all this, seems to me peculiarly appropriate:

"This is the victory that overcometh the world,
even our faith".

It is our faith that overcometh that world which some times seems to be too greatly controlled by the forces of sin, sorrow and death. In a recent comment in our Daily Bible Reading Leaflet, that for April 8, 1959, we find these words:

"We are kept uncomfortably aware of the predicament of the world. Reports come to us of greed, hate, lust for power, sloth, fear, covetousness and envy; and experts give us their pet cures for these ills. But, they are symptoms of a single disease, and the diagnosis is an old and unpopular word: SIN! Political remedies cannot cure what is not a political trouble; economic systems cannot set right what is not an economic problem. The sickness of the world, in whole nations or in your house, is a spiritual one. It is nothing less than that rebellion against God which is SIN!"

These words graphically describe what is too often the situation of our world. As we read the list it sounds like the headings of the columns of the front page of our daily newspapers.

The remedy is described in our text, for our victory over all such ills, in the world and in our hearts, is faith in the saving and healing power of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. With St. Paul we cry:

"God forbid that I should glory save in the Cross of Jesus Christ"; by which I am crucified into the world and the world to me!

This is the victory of faith and hope and love, which we keep fresh and strong and living, as we daily read and study His Work; keep close to Him in our prayers, Morning, Noon and Night; and walk daily with Him as our companion. Thus, more and more, we may enter into the post-Resurrection experience of those disciples on the way to Emmaus, who left us this record: "Did not our hearts burn within us, as He walked and talked with us, and opened to us the Scriptures!"

If our weekly, (or more often), times of public worship do what they may for us, they should always help to establish or re-establish a right perspective in life. Amidst all the changes and chances of this mortal life, we should learn to love the things that God commands and to desire that which God dost promise, so that our hearts may surely be fixed where the joys are to be found.

Living in the midst of the temporal we shall find those eternal values that pass not away and which never let us down; living in a materialistic world, we shall hold fast to spiritual values; thereby realizing the truth of Christ's promise: "My joy no man taketh from you"; "In the world ye shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer for I have overcome the world!"

This, indeed, is "the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith!"

Now, I want to turn more specifically to the occasion which has brought us to this Anniversary Service:

George Clifford Thomas was born October 28th, 1839, and he died April 21, 1909, which that year was just four days after the first Sunday after Easter. In some research I did a few years ago, in connection with writing a history of the Philadelphia Protestant Episcopal City Mission, now known as "Episcopal Community Services, Diocese of Pennsylvania", I came across two facts which are of special interest to us at this Anniversary Service this morning. One is the great helpfulness to the "City Mission" of Mr. Thomas; and the other is the roots of that interest in Old St. Paul's Church, 225 S. 3rd Street, where from 1904 on, that is for 55 years, the City Mission has had its Headquarters. The history I wrote covers the years 1870 - 1955. Mid-way in that history from 1889 - 1914 the Superintendent of the City Mission was the Reverend Dr. Herman L. Duhring. Dr. Duhring and Mr. Thomas grew up together as boys and young men in Old St. Pauls. When it became necessary for the City Mission in 1904, then at 411 Spruce Street, to seek larger quarters, Mr. Thomas was largely instrumental in getting St. Peters Church, 3rd and Pine Streets, to which Parish the property

of Old St. Pauls had been transferred, when the latter Parish gave up its work, - to deed St. Paul's to the Trustees of the Diocese for the use of the City Mission. This proved to be a most advantageous transaction, for an Old Church was put to very good use, and a great and growing Social Service Agency came into the full use of the property for its work. The happy combination of a Church back-ground and environment, in which a Church agency could carry on adequately its social ministry to needy and troubled persons, has been of incalculable value to those served and to the Church in the Diocese of Pennsylvania. For all of which great credit is due to two Old St. Paul's boys; Dr. Herman Duhring and Mr. George Thomas.

This led me to delve further into the history of this Old Parish, which dates back to 1761, when the Church was built, and where services were conducted continuously for some 130 years (1761-1891) until the congregation had all moved out of the neighborhood.

From the late 18th Century until about 1862, the middle of the Civil War, the Parish grew and prospered and became a great power-house of evangelical and missionary life, particularly under the leadership of two great evangelical preachers, the Reverend Dr. Stephen H. Tyng, Rector, 1829 - 1834; and the Reverend Dr. Richard Newton, Rector, 1840 - 1862. As Mr. Thomas was born in 1839, it will be seen that his years, from one year of age until he was 23, were spent under the inspiring influence of this dedicated spiritual father and pastor, an influence which proved to be life-long and was of immeasurable value to the Episcopal Church in Parish, Diocese, Nation and throughout the world.

Fortunately, we have a vivid picture of that back-ground and those spiritual foundations, from no less a person than the Reverend Dr. Nathaniel S. Thomas, Rector of Holy Apostles Church from 1898 - 1909, described by him in a sermon preached at the dedication of St. Pauls Church, 15th and Porter Streets, in 1907, which was a gift of Mr. and Mrs. Thomas. Just as this Chapel of the Holy Communion, where we are now worshipping was also their gift, a thank offering for the deliverance of their son, George C. Jr., from a serious operation on ship-board, while the family were on

their way to Europe, when the boy was 12 years of age.

Let me stop here for a moment to speak directly to the boys and girls at this Service, a large group of whom are right in front of me in the Junior Choir, and are helping so nicely in this Anniversary Service. This is partly the story of influence of a Minister and Parish upon a growing boy; and we are worshipping today in a Church which is a thank-offering for the safe recovery from serious illness of a 12-year old boy; so this service has a special interest for you.

Now to return to Dr. Thomas' picture of Old St. Paul's Church, which had so great and so lasting an influence upon the life of Mr. George C. Thomas, as it was in his boyhood, say from 1845 - 1862.

The quotation follows:

"When one considers the somber room in which the Sunday School was held, in the basement of Old St. Paul's Church, and then thinks of the brightness and cheer which flooded the whole atmosphere, we may well pause to consider whether the environment is as important as we are wont to consider; or is it personalities, such as Richard Newton, which make the great difference? Look with me for a moment into that wonderful school, when George Thomas was a boy there. Men and women are at work intent upon teaching the Gospel story as they learned it under the heart-searching preaching from St. Paul's Pulpit. John W. Thomas, the father of George C., who was for many years a Vestryman, the Accounting Warden and Superintendent of the Sunday School, is teaching with his gentle voice, while in the opposite corner is Jay Cooke, also busy with the lesson. A wonderful body of lay people are teaching in that school under the leadership of its superintendent, Thomas Latimer. And, the good they did lives after them in the person and work of scores, who still bear the burden and heat of the day with strength and zeal; and in the lives of hundreds, even thousands, who have received their inspiration from them".

Included in that select company who worshipped and worked in Old St. Pauls, were three Bishops, thirty Clergy and many, many laymen, of

whom George C. Thomas is an outstanding and inspiring example. Here we are, 50 years after his death, paying our tribute to him, and to that great evangelical and missionary spirit, which emanated from the Parish and the Rector, which so deeply influenced him and all these others.

It bore fruit in starting other Parishes, in the first and second quarters of the 19th Century. Among them was the Church of the Holy Apostles at 21st and Christian Streets, started by Phillips Brooks and George Thomas, as a missionary outreach from Holy Trinity Church, on January 26th, 1868, the day after St. Paul's Day. There for 41 years, until the day of his death, April 21, 1909, Mr. and Mrs. Thomas served with unfailing devotion and richly blessed results. From this Parish came January 26th, 1888, just 20 years later, also the day after St. Paul's Day, this Chapel of the Holy Communion; then followed St. Simon the Cyrenian, and then the Chapel of the Mediator at 51st and Spruce Streets, now the Parish Church of the Holy Apostles and the Mediator, whose present Rector, the Reverend Dr. John H. W. Bomberger and Mrs. Bomberger are joining with us in this Anniversary Service. And, it is a great joy to all of us, I am sure, to have with us also Mr. Thomas's daughter, Mrs. Sophie Thomas Volkmar, as a living link of the family with this notable record of past and present service to our Lord and His Church.

One word more about Mr. Thomas and his service to our beloved Episcopal Church, in Parish, Diocese, Nation and throughout the world, not so much in praise of him, that he would not like, but as an emulation for us here today to go and do likewise. We cannot remotely match the extent of his influence, but we can, if we will, match his loyalty and devotion. This is the factual record: For 41 years he never missed attendance at morning and evening Service on Sunday, if in town, and he always tried to be there; he was always in his place as the superintendent at the Sunday School, (often playing the organ and leading the music) and here he was following his father's foot-steps and example; and he was always on hand for the Friday evening Sunday School Teacher's Study! He was also Treasurer of the Diocese of Pennsylvania and for a number of years National Treasurer of the Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society, involving frequent trips

to New York and manifesting deep, personal interest in the Church's missionaries all over the world. This interest inspired gifts of buildings: Churches, Parish House, Schools and Rectories, all over the world!!

It is obvious that in this man's life Christ and His Church was paramount. One of his very great contributions, and here again is a field in which our boys and girls have a deep interest, is the "Sunday School Lenten Offerings for Missions," long known as the "Mite Box Offering". John Marston, an old St. Paul's boy, started this in the Sunday School of St. John's Church, Cynwyd, Pennsylvania, when he was superintendent of the Sunday School there in 1879, but he was aided and abetted in this enterprise by his life-long friend, George C. Thomas. Soon afterwards it was taken up in Holy Apostle's Sunday School, then by practically all the Sunday Schools of our Diocese, eventually spreading throughout the whole Church. It resulted in sending many hundreds of thousands of dollars to the Mission Fields. It is still "going strong" and the annual Presentation Services for many years out of doors on the beautiful and commodious campus of the Episcopal Academy, were high water marks in the life of our Diocese.

For four years now it has been divorced from the main stream of missionary giving and no longer counts on "Parish Quotas". Personally, I regret this, because I am sure it will result in cutting the main nerve of the impulse for this offering, even though it will, no doubt, be a real help to the "specials" to which it is now being devoted. (I have an idea Mr. Thomas would not have approved this change). I want to recur to this "Childrens Offering" and what, I believe, was its real genesis, many years before the first offering at Cynwyd in 1879.

We must now speedily bring this Sermon to its conclusion. I want to do so by drawing together our theme, "VICTORY THROUGH FAITH", with an observation or two drawn from the foregoing facts and related thereto, plus, the interesting story of the good ship "John Lewis".

First: As I have read the historical and biographical data touched upon in what I have talked to you about in this Anniversary Service, I detect a golden thread running through our message, it is that of the

tremendous power inherent in lives fully consecrated to telling the old old story of Jesus and His Love; a power in those who have caught a vision of the wonder and glory of the Redeeming Grace of God, as set forth in the life and teaching of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Stephen Tyng and Richard Newton had just that, and they passed it on to John Thomas and Jay Cooke; to George Thomas and John Marston; and to a great company of faithful people - Bishops, Clergy, Laymen and Lay-women - through whom it has spread around this whole wide world, bringing help and healing and salvation to countless souls.

Now, for the story of the Ship, "JOHN LEWIS". When George Thomas was a boy in Old St. Pauls, about in the 1860's, an Englishman, a member of the Sunday School, was going to England on a vacation trip and he asked the scholars in the school what he could bring them as a souvenir. They suggested it might be something connected with a Missionary or Missions. So, he went to the headquarters of the Church Missionary Society in London with this request. They told him there happened to be in port the old Ship "JOHN LEWIS" which had been for many year engaged in taking Missionaries to and from their distant fields. It was being dismantled and broken up, so he was given a spar therefrom. He brought it back to Philadelphia, and there happened to be a man in Old St. Pauls whose hobby was carving ship-models. He took the spar and carved out of it a model ship about 24 inches long, which we are told was an exact small replica of the "JOHN LEWIS" - hull, spars, rigging and all the rest. The replica was also named the "JOHN LEWIS" and for many years was wheeled up and down the aisles of Old St. Pauls, on the occasion of the Annual Missionary Service, which, like its modern counter-part, the Lenton Offering Presentation Services, referred to above, was one of the high-water marks of the Parish Year. Each class laid its class offering on the decks of the "JOHN LEWIS" with much wholesome and good natured spirit of competition. Many, many hundreds of dollars for the cause of Missions were gathered in this way, over the years, until, like the original it was retired from active service and now reposes in a glass case in the Parish House of the Church of the Holy Apostles and Mediator.

I believe it still "sails on" in the hearts of the Sunday School Scholars of today as they save and give their pennies, nickles and dollars to this same beloved Missionary Cause, that stirred the hearts and minds and wills of the children of Old St. Pauls, more than one hundred years ago!

Now, we conclude, as we began, with the message of this glorious, old Collect for the Second Sunday after Easter:

As we gratefully receive God's gifts and blessings,
especially the blessing of the example of God's
faithful soldiers and servants, May we daily endeavor
to follow the blessed step of His most holy life, Who
was their Guide, their Inspiration and their Strength!

"O watch and fight and pray
The battle neèr give oèr
Renew it boldly every day
And help divine implore!"

"This is the VICTORY THAT OVERCOMETH THE WORLD, even our
FAITH!"

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SERMON DELIVERED APRIL 23, 1961

AT

MEMORIAL CHAPEL OF THE HOLY COMMUNION

27th and Wharton Streets, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

on the occasion of

the 52nd Anniversary of the death of

The Founder Of The Church

GEORGE CLIFFORD THOMAS

by

THE VERY REV. DR. ALBERT H. LUCAS

DEAN OF THE PHILADELPHIA DIVINITY SCHOOL

PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA



I suppose that many a preacher on this occasion has used a very famous Old Testament text: "Let us now praise famous men." But I didn't select a text. Instead I thought I should begin by saying that I understood that on this particular Sunday each year it is customary to honor the memory of him whom the City of Philadelphia and the Diocese of Pennsylvania and the Protestant Episcopal Church at-large ever paid tribute.

I cherish the privilege of being with this congregation this morning at the invitation of your Vicar and Mrs. Volkmar and I hope with the more or less cross-fingered approval of the Rector of Holy Apostles.

I am also happy to join with you in commemorating the founding of the Chapel of the Holy Communion and I think upon its seventy-fifth anniversary. I note that the Chapel is four years older than I am, and to my eyes that makes it quite ancient.

What is truly important is that a layman so loved our Lord and was so grateful to our Lord that he gave this Chapel as a thanks offering to Almighty God for the recovery from desperate illness of the layman's son and namesake.

Thanks be to God for such gratitude and for such faith, and, as the Vicar has said in his leaflet, so may it ever be. So few, tragically, return to give thanks.

Aside from the Episcopal Church, the late George C. Thomas and I had something else in common. We were both graduates of the Episcopal Academy, although Mr. Thomas preceded me by fifty-five years.

I knew him slightly. I was fifteen at the time of his death. He was and is one of the men I honor above all others within my life's span. The other is Mrs. Lucas's uncle, George Wharton Pepper.

Mr. Thomas, aside from giving this lovely Chapel to God for us men and for our salvation, made a lasting impression upon the Church in Philadelphia and throughout the Episcopal Church from ocean to ocean. Permit me to review some of the accomplishments of this truly great layman in the short time I make claim upon your attention.

Through his business acumen, built upon his background with the famous banking house of Drexel & Company, Mr. Thomas became a trustee of this Diocese's investments. So wise was he in developing the securities of the Diocese that his wisdom caught the eye of the headquarters of the Episcopal Church in New York. His services were sought and for thirteen years he gave his time and knowledge as National Treasurer of the Episcopal Church without remuneration. What a gift!

Mr. Thomas was not satisfied to serve his Diocese and the Church at-large so heroically. He plunged into the significant legislation of the General Convention of the Episcopal Church for a period of twenty-one years, and attended as a lay deputy in the Diocese of Pennsylvania for seven General Conventions.

No layman in the Church was more familiar with the domestic and foreign mission and our problems as Episcopalians within this enormous field than was Mr. Thomas. Nor did anyone do more for spreading the gospel of God and the teachings of our beloved Church than did this noble layman.

God breathed many gifts of the Holy Spirit into George C. Thomas, among them the love of music; and for twenty years, and again without remuneration, he was Choir Master and Organist. Much of this loving service was given to his home parish of Holy Apostles, which was known to so many of the people throughout the Diocese of Pennsylvania as George C. Thomas's Church. To Mr. Thomas it was ever the Church of God.

Great must have been the influence of the clergy upon this great man's life to have made of him such a stalwart disciple.

To those of us familiar with the life of this layman of all-time greatness his foremost achievement was the building of Christian character and teaching in the lives of the church's boys and girls. What other layman in the history of the Episcopal Church took over a Sunday School of forty-one and built its attendance to over fifteen hundred exclusive of adult Bible classes?

This was Mr. Thomas's contribution to Holy Apostles, again without remuneration and for the God he served.

While Treasurer of the National Church Mr. Thomas learned of the poverty of our missionaries in the domestic and in the foreign mission fields. From John Marston, another noble layman of this Diocese, Mr. Thomas recognized the potential of the Lenten Mite Box Offering and developed this project on a national basis. It caught fire and great was the competition among the Dioceses of the Episcopal Church to present the largest Diocesan offering through its mite boxes.

The Diocese of Pennsylvania, during Mr. Thomas's time, was never surpassed in its total offering and the Church of the Holy Apostles never stood lower than first in its parochial offering for the missions of the Church.

Upon his death it was greatly feared that the Diocese of Pennsylvania would lose its prestige for missionary zeal. It was then that another superb layman of this Diocese picked up the missionary fervor of Mr. Thomas and continued its ascendancy in the support of missions, and his name was George Wharton Pepper.

In a sense, you of this Chapel have inherited from Mr. Thomas the spirit of a truly great soul. I beg of you: Guard your inheritance.

It would be unjust were there no reference to her who for forty-two years was Mr. Thomas's alter ego, Ada Elizabeth Moorehead Thomas. No one who knew her would hesitate in proclaiming Mrs. George C. Thomas as great in her own right and as devoted a churchwoman as was her husband a devoted layman.

She was a woman of great personal charm, of great refinement, and of extraordinary wisdom. Quiet and quite on her own for fifty-six years she matched her husband's religious fervor as a Sunday School teacher. What a combination in the service of our Lord! Nor did Mrs. Thomas's service to the Church die in grief upon her earthly separation from her life of family devotion. She continued her vibrant activity for the spread of the kingdom for long years thereafter, bringing an incredible amount of happiness to everyone she touched.

Those of us who live in this whirlwind world will gain courage and strength from this man and this woman, Christians of their day, bright stars in our vision, and to guide us as our own years increase.

May our Lord grant them now and always the peace that Paradise alone affords and may we always remember that death is the warden and not the thief of our treasures.

In the name of the Father, and of His Son, and of the Holy Ghost, Amen.

Blessed be Thy name, O Lord, that it hath pleased Thee to put it into the hearts of Thy servants George and Ada, who appropriated this house to Thy honor and work. And grant that all who shall enjoy the benefit of this pious work may show forth their thankfulness by making the right use of it to the glory of Thy blessed name, through Jesus Christ, our Lord, Amen.